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1962/05/10

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 10, 1962

~~TOP SECRET~~

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE PRESIDENT

Meeting on Laos

There will be present at the meeting this afternoon the following: Secretary Ball, Assistant Secretary Harriman, General Taylor, General Decker, Mr. Hilsman, Mr. Bundy.

The most recent reports indicate that the situation in Northern Laos is deteriorating rapidly. Ban Houei Sai may already have fallen (Vientiane 1529 attached). This city is on the Mekong River at the Thai border. CAS and Ambassador Brown report that other areas are threatened (see CIA 32201 attached.)

In view of this situation the State Department, Governor Harriman concurring, has prepared a discussion paper (attached) recommending that the U.S. make certain military moves designed to impress the Russians and Chinese with the seriousness with which we view the situation. The recommendations are, first, to move a naval task force into the Gulf of Siam, and second, to send the 1000-man battle group now in Thailand up to the border opposite Vientiane.

Such steps would be designed to impress the Russians and Chinese with our concern without at the same time threatening China's sensitive interest in the northern provinces or leading Phoumi to believe that we are about to pull his chestnuts out of the fire.

If such actions are taken, the question arises of what to do if they failed to achieve the desired result of re-establishing a cease fire. I do not believe that you have to make a decision on this point, since the type of action suggested by State does not commit us to a follow up. Whether or not we make a show of resistance, we are going to get a black eye if the Communists take over the country.

MVForrestal

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By ___ NARA, Date 5/4/07

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